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# PHILOSOPHICAL TERMINOLOGY AND ITS HISTORY.<sup>1</sup>

## EXPOSITORY AND APPELLATORY.

### I.

WHOEVER has at heart the interests of genuine monism, and would see the intellectual world united and a more intimate consolidation of human effort established, will joyfully welcome every attempt to close up the gaps in the realm of opinion and to facilitate mutual understanding. For this reason, if for no other, the peculiar language of philosophy is deserving of much greater consideration than usually falls to its share. From time immemorial the complaint has been made that philosophers frequently converse in different tongues and are incapable of understanding one another, that from this source no end of controversy has arisen and the advance of the work been materially impeded. And the further complaint has been made that the obscurity and ambiguity of its phraseology has utterly estranged philosophy from common life. There has been no dearth of projects for the removal of these undesirable conditions; but it is likely that more would have been accomplished had the language of philosophy itself been more closely scrutinised and studied. On the other hand, the field of terminology holds out unusual attractions to the scholar. A technical term, a mere word and sign, taken by itself, does indeed appear a matter of little moment, and, accordingly, it is very apt to be contemned. But if there is nothing insignificant generally for

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from Professor Eucken's manuscript by Thomas J. McCormack.

science, the far-reaching connexions of the present subject with problems of broad interest and with the great intellectual movements of the present are so obtrusive that the fruitful issue of its pursuit cannot for a moment be doubted.

Technical terms take their rise in an intimate association, in a seemingly indissoluble union of concept and word. Things spoken and things thought, things of sense and things not of sense, are compacted by them into a unified product, and thus bear unmistakable testimony to the inward unity of the two worlds. A concept may carry on a species of existence without possessing a specific form of expression, but when such is the case it hovers like a spirit in the air and is apt to vanish again; at any rate its bodilessness prevents it from ever attaining a powerful stage of efficiency. On the other hand, a word may be current for a long time before it is taken up by science and converted into a vehicle for an idea. In such conditions there is wanting to it the significance that invests it with value for intellectual work. The union of body and mind, the intimate association of word and idea, alone creates the technical term. With the technical term a new being is born which has its own fortunes and its own history. The addition made to the subject by the word is by no means immaterial or subordinate, for a word is not empty and dead, but has a definite character, and awakens images and often emotions. There are words that affect us at once sympathetically, and others that as readily awaken in us antipathy, words that aid the idea or detract from it—felicitous and unfelicitous terms. One unfelicitous word of this class, for example, is the term *metaphysics*, the reason being that this word naturally awakens the impression that the philosophical study of first principles is concerned with something above and distinct from nature. Emotions are notably aroused by party names, because every one seeks to place his own cause in a favorable, and that of his opponents in an unfavorable light. Hobbes's remark on politics applies with equal force to philosophy (*De cive*, VII.); "solent homines per nomina non res tantum, sed et proprios affectus una significare." It is manifest, thus, that the history of terms is coincident neither with that of ideas nor with that of words.

The scientific terms which we employ to-day as self-evident in their meaning are the results of the intellectual labors of ages. We are the debtors in this regard of the Greeks and the Romans, of mediæval scholasticism and of all the leading nations of modern times. Every single technical term, viewed in this light, may be considered as possessing a distinct individuality and may be biographically treated; it has its birth and its death, it attains prominence and becomes obsolete, or, it issues victorious from the struggle for existence and becomes the permanent possession of science. To pursue the biography of words through their principal phases is often a fascinating but not less frequently a difficult task. The first question is when and where, in what environment and under what conditions, as well as from what motives a technical term has originated. Even the outward circumstances of fact are not always easily disclosed; for the new does not always turn out to be new;<sup>1</sup> in the majority of cases no satisfactory explanation can be had of its origin; and at times its novelty is intentionally concealed. Furthermore, words which are subsequently in every one's mouth often occur first in extremely out of the way places. For example, the word *optimist* was probably first used by Jesuit scholars to describe the system of Leibnitz (*Mémoires de Trevoux*, 1737, February); *theodicée* was first used by Leibnitz himself in 1697 in a letter to the Italian scholar Magliabecchi; *natura naturans*—a phrase which attained exceptional prominence in the hands of Giordano Bruno and Spinoza—is taken, as Erdmann and Siebeck have shown, from the Latin translation of Averroes.

Circumstances of chance may have a large share in the production of a new technical term; and consequently the facts of its origin do not always enable us to make positive deductions as to the character of the accompanying intellectual operations. But ordinarily it is increased interest in the idea itself and a powerful sense

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<sup>1</sup>For example, Christian Wolff (*Phil. rationalis sive logica*, Cap. III., par. 85) says: "Datur alia adhuc philosophiæ naturalis pars, quæ fines rerum explicat, nomine adhuc destituta, etsi amplissima sit et utilissima. Dici posset teleologia." With regard to *sociology* Comte (*Cours de philosophie positive*, IV., 185) says: "Je crois devoir hasarder, dès à présent, ce terme nouveau."

of its want that produces a term ; a confession of faith, or even a thesis, may be wrapped up in a word. Thus there were weighty reasons why the word *deist*<sup>1</sup> appeared during the intellectual stirrings of the Reformation period, and why the word *rationalist*<sup>2</sup> arose during the English struggles for independence ; why the word *pantheist* was coined in England in the beginning of the eighteenth century,<sup>3</sup> and why recent times also produced in England the word *agnostic*.<sup>4</sup> The desire to give to important ideas a convenient expression and wider circulation is the most powerful factor in the production of technical terms. Consequently, in the matter of form, considerations of beauty, and even of etymological correctness are of small importance. When Alexander Baumgarten, the pupil of Wolff, introduced the word *æsthetics* as describing the science of the beautiful, there was no lack of opposition from philosophical quarters, but opposition could not prevent the installation of the word. Comte's *sociology* is more barbarous still, but its practical and formal utility silenced all linguistic scruples.

It is one thing to coin a word, however, and another to get it generally adopted. To attain this last goal, a word has often a long and hard road to travel, although in other cases its adoption is exceedingly rapid, one might almost say explosive in its character. Frequently, a word which is afterwards to become the common possession of all educated men, is restricted for a long time to the narrow precincts of a school. A passage in Xenophon tells us, for example, that in his time *cosmos*, as an expression for the universe at large,

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<sup>1</sup>In the *épttre dédicatoire* of Viret's *Instruction Chrétienne*, which appeared in 1564, we read: "Il y en a plusieurs, qui confessent bien qu'ils croient qu'il y a quelque Dieu et quelque Divinité, comme les Turcs et les Juifs. J'ai entendu qu'il y en a de cette bande, qui s'appellent Déistes, d'un mot tout nouveau, lequel il veulent opposer à Athéisme."

<sup>2</sup>Lechler, at page 61 of his *History of English Deism*, says: "In Clarendon's State-papers, Vol. II., p. xii of the introduction, an entry of the 14th of October, 1646, reads: "There is a new sect sprung up among them (Presbyterians and Independents) and these are the Rationalists; and what their reason dictates them in Church or State stands for good, until they be convinced with better."

<sup>3</sup>*Pantheist* was first used by Toland, 1705; *pantheism* by his opponent Fay, 1709.

<sup>4</sup>*Agnosticism* was coined by Huxley in 1859.

was still felt to be a strange term.<sup>1</sup> Lessing still treats *subjective* and *objective* as learned scholastic terms, whereas since Kant they have become securely established in common speech. The word *monism* coined by Christian Wolff only gained a limited circulation among the adherents of Hegel, and its present popularity is due to the modern theory of evolution.

As worthy of notice as its rise and adoption is the obsolescence and disappearance of a term. Conformably to the twofold motive underlying the creation of terms, the occasion of their production may reside either in the word or in the idea. The same idea can change its form of expression, or the term may grow obsolete because of the idea losing its ground. The change of the mere word is naturally less important, although in this case also there must exist good reasons why the change has occurred at a given time. Thus, there is a natural connexion between the sharp distinction drawn between mind and nature by Descartes and the reason why Robert Boyle introduced the term *materialist* to characterise thinkers who prior to that time had been called Epicureans or Democriteans.

But of greater importance, of course, is the fading away and disappearance of terms, for here we have palpable evidences of revolutions and transformations in the world of ideas. As the vocabulary of astronomy and alchemy vanished when they vanished, so the terms of philosophy lose their ground when the strata of thought disappear of which they are the expression. With scholasticism, scholastic terms also had to vanish. This last example, however, is an excellent instance also of the contrary proposition, that the fate of a term is not unconditionally bound up with that of the idea. A word which has fully established itself is a far too convenient implement, a far too powerful auxiliary to be given up lightly; and thus it comes to pass that men seek to save the word in the transformation of the idea and to adapt it to its new intellectual environment. This is what happened with the main terms of scholastic terminology broadly considered.

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<sup>1</sup> Xenophōn, Memor. I, 1, 11: ὁ καλούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν σοφιστῶν κόσμος.

After the Renaissance and the beginnings of modern philosophy had rejected this terminology wholesale, there was gradually brought about by a sort of inward transformation a renascence of scholastic terminology. How could we do to-day without words like *subjective* and *objective*, *formal* and *real*, *abstract* and *concrete*, *a priori* and *a posteriori*, *actual* and *virtual*, *individuality*, *ideal*, etc.? They are all children of scholasticism. If the meaning of terms changes thus while at the same time retaining some connexion with their earliest import, if amid all transformation such unmistakable continuity reigns, then certainly we have a right to speak of an inward history of terms,<sup>1</sup> and it is to be expected that this history will open a far deeper vista into the movement of thought than can their outward fortunes.

Before quitting this history, it is to be observed, that at times and in an analogous manner to the operations of organic nature, there are frequently left over, of whole groups and families of words, only a few species, which lead an isolated existence as survivals and are extremely difficult to understand. We speak nowadays of *moral certainty* (*certitudo moralis*); but we have no idea of what the expression *moral* signifies in this connexion until we resort to the terminology of scholasticism where *moral* is opposed to *physical* and has approximately the significance of "inward," so that, to cite an example, *causa moralis* was contrasted with *causa physica*.

The inward history of terms is extremely varied, and it can give distinct expression to mighty as well as to unobtrusive movements of thought with greater faithfulness and delicacy than any other method. We shall select only a few examples from the unlimited wealth of this field. Often we have brought to our notice the migration of a term from one province to another. Thomas Hyde, who in his book *Historia religionis veterum Persarum* (1700) was the first to use the expression *dualist*, denoted by the word a religious doctrine which simultaneously with the principle of the good posited a principle of evil of like eternality; and also Bayle used the word

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<sup>1</sup> Lessing justly remarks, "the thing to which the usage of speech continues to give a definite name, certainly also continues to retain something in common with that thing for which this name was invented."

in this sense. But Christian Wolff applied the word to the relation of mind and body and so transplanted it into metaphysics. *A priori* and *a posteriori*, both late-mediæval terms, whose ultimate origin may be traced to Aristotle, first designated the opposition of deductive and of inductive procedure, but since the eighteenth century and particularly since Kant, have come to express the contrast between knowledge originating in pure thought and knowledge originating in experience. They have been transferred, accordingly, from methodology to epistemology. *Egoism* in the first half of the eighteenth century was the name of a theoretical doctrine which recognised the individual ego of the thinking person as the only real existent; in the second half of that century, the transition to its present meaning was effected.

In such transitions may often be found incorporated the broadest tendencies of contemporary thought. Towards the close of antiquity we see philosophical terms undergo a transformation from the theoretical into the practical and ethical. On the other hand, in the last few centuries the movement of thought has been from the objective to the subjective, from metaphysics to epistemology and psychology. Throughout the whole history of this period, terms for outward things (for example, *culture*, *organic*, *mechanical*) have been converted into terms for internal things. But this movement has an extremely variable tempo and exhibits the most diversified phases.

Furthermore, terms may exhibit extremely varied transformations of inward composition. By *monism*, Christian Wolff sought to describe that view of the world which regarded either the physical principle or the mental principle as the sole and ultimate substratum of reality. A word so artificial in its character as this, which embraced in the same class the extremest differences, could not of course establish itself. But the word existed and merely awaited employment in some other sense. This it found at the hands of the school of Hegel who were the first to employ it spiritualistically to designate a view of the world which conquered all self-contradictions and antitheses. The meaning which the word predominantly has at present in Germany most likely came from Haeckel and



Schleicher of Jena. However, while Haeckel identifies monism with mechanicalism and materialism, the editor of the present journal, which bears the name of *The Monist*, again broadens the meaning of the term, defining monism as a unitary world-conception, its method being consistency of thought and its ideal a harmonious and systematic presentation of the various aspects of truth.

Such transformative processes may extend over thousands of years and reflect in miniature all the main phases of evolution. For example, this is the case with the word *idea*. Not only in this word are such enormous differences clearly distinguished from one another as occur in the ontological and æsthetical thought of Plato, the religious speculations of Philo and Plotinus, the psychological of Descartes and Locke, and the transcendental of Kant, but almost every independent thinker has found expression of his individuality in delicate shades of usage of this word.

In such transformations terms may depart very widely from their original significations, nay, form a direct antithesis thereto; and they may in their career follow diametrically opposite paths. *Form* signified in scholastic usage the essence which shaped things from within; subsequently, outward appearance. *Evolution* in the eighteenth century was the name of Leibnitz's theory of development, which conceived all growth of organic nature as the mere swelling or enlargement of diminutive preformations—the so-called encasement theory, against which C. F. Wolff directed his famous *Theoria generationis*. But now this designation is borne by the *modern* theory of development, which inclines to the view of Wolff and is diametrically opposed to that of Leibnitz. Also the complete inversion of meaning is known which the expressions *subjective* and *objective* have suffered, as compared with their scholastic usage. Until the end of the seventeenth century the word *subjective*, being the adjective derived from and referring to *subject* or *subjectum*, had the precise significance that the word *objective* now has, and *vice versa*. The revolution in the meaning of this word started in Germany, and for a long time it was felt by other nations as a strange innovation. The transformation would hardly have been possible

had not the terms been transplanted into a different language and into a different intellectual environment.

So far we have regarded terms entirely as individual elements, but our subject acquires a far higher interest when we take up the study of the mutual relations of the individual elements and seek out the meaning of their union in larger organic groups. Here are to be met the most varied complications and interactions, now mutual reinforcement, now pronounced hostility, here quiet persistence, there rapid change—the whole a kaleidoscopic and frequently fascinating spectacle. Running throughout the whole there is a common effort traceable, a common seeking after the appropriate and adequate designation of the ideas controlling our thought ; everywhere we find acting, so to speak, a teleological principle, a principle of selection of the fittest. But this effort and aspiration does not come from without as the result of reflective thought ; it acts through and by way of the individual elements, and is their own intimate outcome. The elements must needs develop and do battle with one another, so as to show their potency. Looking at these individual events solely, we observe a predominantly molecular and mechanical action ; pure and actual matters of fact are displayed ; principles like heredity, struggle for existence, and adaptation to the environment play in this process at least a prominent part, if not exactly that which is observable in nature. The real motive factors cannot be clearly established until all is considered as a whole, despite the fact that we have their activity brought distinctly to our notice in the individual terms themselves.

Manifestly the existence of terms is subject to the conflicting influences of a tendency to persist and of a tendency to change, where *existence* means actual living employment in science as distinguished from mere historical occurrence. A term once in existence, now, is easily kept in existence by being handed down from generation to generation, or by simple heredity. A term offers to thought a convenient tool, an unfailing lever, and opens up extremely easy paths. It is given to us without labor on our part by the hand of tradition, and is communicated to us as a matter of course. Is there any wonder that we accept it calmly and continue

to employ it as it was given into our possession? A term has here all the impregnable authority of an ultimate fact. It is forgotten that often it contains more than a mere designation, and may be the embodiment of an extremely problematic opinion. We find thus displayed here a faculty of permanence, a genuine "natural inertia." We never recognise its potency more distinctly than in the stupendous power of resistance which established distinctions possess; it would seem as if they could never be made to loose their hold on the mind. The four temperaments with their characteristic phraseology have been preserved to the present day through all the mutations of physiological and psychological theories; the old form was so puissant that the new ideas had to make use of them in order to gain acceptance themselves. The power of actuality augments by simple persistence; the term becomes more and more firmly established and more and more firmly interwoven with the rest of tradition. If this tendency to persist encounters no opposition, the terms will also gradually come to form among themselves an aggregate of increasing solidity and finally become consolidated into a system; but then, despite all the resultant advantages of formal elaboration, there is a constant danger of inward torpor and a cessation of intellectual progress, whereof we have an example in the later phases of scholasticism.

Where the intellectual life is vigorous and buoyant, there is no want of counteraction by transformative forces. Where terms are part of a living tongue, the incessant though scarcely perceptible changes in the meanings of words ensure them from becoming absolutely rigid. In an unusual degree are the conditions of existence surrounding terms altered by the transference of intellectual achievements to a new language. But the stability of terms is most powerfully and frequently shaken by stupendous catastrophes and revolutions in the realm of thought, or by the shifting of the main bent of philosophy. In all such movements frequently several candidates lay claim to the same place or standing. If no intellectual compromise can be effected by a division of the domain, one must give way before the other in the fierce struggle for existence that necessarily ensues. In this way in periods of fruitful

creative activity the single systems come into hostile conflict. None can control the empire of thought unless it is successful in enforcing general acceptance for its terminology. But by the very act of achieving this victory, that is, by the very act of their passing into common speech, they lose a certain amount of their peculiar characteristics, although the loss is not total. Thus, much of the spirit of systems still abides in the terms imposed by them on the world, and their influence, although unobtrusive and recondite, is still generally noticeable and enables us to form a judgment of the measure of their success. Terms that are not accepted may persist within the school itself, but their life is severed from the general movement of thought, and their cultivation is entirely artificial.

A different kind of contest arises when the traditional phraseology of a language comes into conflict with the traditional phraseology of a foreign tongue. In a limited degree this conflict is enacted wherever one civilised nation is in contact with another. It comes to pass on a far grander scale where a large mass of intellectual achievement is transplanted totally to the soil of a new language. In such a conjuncture the continuity of tradition is broken. A sifting and winnowing of the material is imperative. Even the terms that are preserved must establish their right anew, and frequently undergo adaptive modification in respect of form. On the other hand, even after a term has asserted its initial fitness, still its position is not definitively assured; for the deeper the intellectual movement strikes root in the new soil, the more imperative is its demand for forms adapted to this new soil; new expressions are coined and act with all the fresh and vigorous potency of natural and original elements, whilst the old has all the advantages of assured position. Even when the new terms are actually advancing and on the general road to acceptance, still victory is not assured in all cases. A contest of the kind referred to was conducted by the Romans against the Greek terminology, and by the Germans against the Latin terminology of the schoolmen. The Germans had the advantage of a more opulent and flexible tongue, but the Romans presented a solider front, and better understood the method of consolidating the achievements of individuals into an organic

whole. Where two terms laid claim to the same place, not infrequently both were preserved side by side, whereupon afterwards a differentiation of ideas ensued. Originally mere outward inducements to fix the meanings of different words as regards one another have in the end frequently led to an inward and profound subtilisation of thought. As often happens in the world, an advance was here also made from without to within, and accidental circumstances aided the advancement of reason.

The inward displacement of the intellectual situation by new systems of thought must be great according as the rupture of the new with the old is abrupt and its way of stamping itself on the thought of the times is vigorous. Particularly severe will the collision be at the points where the centre of the new system is situated; for here least of all can the thinker accommodate his mind to the strange forms. At this point, consequently, either a new formation must result or the old must become adapted by inward transformation to the new conditions of life. But though every system imparts from its centre a new undulation into the sea of terminology, yet the behavior of thinkers varies greatly in this regard. One class treat the form as something unessential, in fact have a positive dread of giving a determinate form to their systems, going so far as to regard such procedure as a restriction. Such was the manner of Fichte. Others, on the other hand, cannot rest until their ideas have found full and permanent incarnation. On this question men like Plato and Leibnitz have held liberal views; Aristotle and Kant have observed a more rigorous standard. For terminology the latter are the leading spirits.

All these processes vary in intensity and pursue different courses, according as they deal with technical terms proper—terms which describe a definite subject or a definite activity, that is, define some actual matter of fact—or as they deal with terms that involve a characterisation or judgment, as, for example all party names do. Since the latter appeal in a high degree to the emotions, they are consequently subject to far more vacillation. Powerful impulses from without are not needed for shifting the situation in the case of such terms; in fact, their own development trans-

forms it of itself. These terms go through some such course of development as fashions; they annihilate themselves by a species of immanent dialectic. For a thing that springs up originally as having a special significance and as designed to mark off a definite movement from others, is, when its aim has been accomplished, appropriated by others. But the more the number of its claimants increases, the more the word comes into general circulation, the more it loses its discriminative efficacy, the more it is exhausted and worn out. Its bearers must look about them for some new expression whereby to distinguish themselves sharply and unmistakably from others. Thus its outward diffusion results in inward annihilation, and the repeated exhaustion and constant change of party names is rendered intelligible.

In glancing over the changes which the total body of terms undergoes in all these movements, a contrary direction of development is unmistakably obvious. On the one hand, there prevails a tendency for increasing minuteness of ramification and sharper differentiations, and on the other hand a desire for simplicity and for reducing systems to clear and stable fundamental lines. Where the foundations of a work persist unchanged and the construction of the edifice is quietly continued, we have always to expect increasing carefulness of elaboration and increasing exactness in the specification of the ideas of the system and consequently of its terminology. This process is displayed with special distinctness in later scholasticism. But it involves the danger, which runs hand in hand with increasing subtilisation, of losing touch with direct and living experience, and of degenerating into artificial routine. If the foundations are then attacked, there is eminent peril of the whole structure collapsing. Subsequently, and as the result thereof, the tendency arises to repudiate entirely all subtle definitions and to fix the meaning of only the most simple, the most incontestable and the most immediate notions.

This is what was done by the great thinkers of the seventeenth century, and by none more than by Spinoza. In all the crucial points of his system we find him constantly bent on exhibiting the identity of ideas which formerly were discriminated with great zeal

and assiduity ; again and again we meet in the works of this great monist the characteristic phrase, *unum et idem sunt*. On the new soil, of course, the need of discrimination subsequently again arises, and consequently the same danger may set in that it was first sought to escape. History thus offers the spectacle of successive simplification and differentiation : like Penelope it always seems to be unravelling what it has woven.

In reality, however, this stupendous movement is not without its results. At one time there remains a choice total of permanent gain ; at another there is the hope that, just as cognition is directed to true problems by the experiences gained in strife and controversy, so also in terms there is constantly brought to expression more matter of fact. Since thought is always advancing into infinite stretches ahead of it, and the means of expression also must constantly change, consequently also terminology can arrive at no final goal but must continue in constant development. We must rest satisfied that this movement is not entirely without its fruits.

## II.

The foregoing considerations concerning philosophical terminology might still be developed in many different directions and in far greater detail. Furthermore, they might be brought into relationship with the general problems of language and of the latter's relation to thought. This task, however, would carry us too far, and the little that has been said is perhaps sufficient to establish the significance and fruitfulness of this province of inquiry. A wide domain of research is thrown open here which affords abundant material for study and discovery, and in addition is eminently apt to give assistance in the solution of other scientific problems. The manner in which individual thinkers, nations, and epochs give expression to their thoughts, furnishes an important contribution to the portrayal and appreciation of their character. But, most strikingly of all, the individual is more precisely appreciated, more accurately interpreted, and more distinctly comprehended in his individuality when the peculiar traits of his language are fully grasped.

We come to know in our study of terms individuals, epochs, and nations, as well in their isolated states as in their relations to one another. We recognise the influence which the work of the individual has exercised upon the collective social body. Relations which otherwise would have remained obscure rapidly lend themselves to comprehension from this point of view. Nay, even the collective spectacle of history receives by this procedure a peculiar form—in that it is made to appear less as a continuously flowing current than as a luxuriant mass of branches and foliage or as a complex and intricately woven texture. The individuality and distinctness of the results and creations are brought more visibly to the fore. By having our attention diverted from the results and fastened more particularly upon the means and conditions of the work, the elementary and individual forces involved are more apt to obtain recognition, with the result that the importance of an exact inquiry into the historical facts as distinguished from the speculative treatment of the same, is strongly emphasised, although without rendering the speculative treatment superfluous, nor in any manner dispensing with it.

But this increased importance of individuals and of individual achievements is far from resulting in segregation and waste. On the contrary, here more than elsewhere all things are mutually determined and mutually associated. Not only is the upshot of the individual's achievements parcel of the collective social body, but he himself is indissolubly linked with that body in the conditions and suppositions of his performances. In words and terms the labors of centuries flow in upon the individual; an intellectual environment receives him here with silent but powerful influences. The movement of terms exhibits history far more continuously and uninterruptedly than could possibly be observed from the struggle of ideas. Even opponents meet on this common ground and can profit by contact. Thus is demonstrated and strengthened here that treatment and view of history and sociology which forms a marked characteristic of our nineteenth century. At the same time the limitations of this view and of the influence of the collective social body are just at this point rendered manifest. Tradition is useful only



when it does not suppress the native activity of the individual. Traditional terminology aids scientific work only when it is grasped by independent thought, carefully tested, and revived. If some such opposing influence is wanting and individual power is not exerted on this subject, the heirloom of ages may be converted into a fateful burden, intellectual labor perforce will stagnate, grow formal and even erroneous. Thus history and society do not hold sway over the individual as an unavoidable destiny, but the interaction, or, as we might say, the struggle of individuals with the collective body, of the present with the past, is the fountain-head of all true life.

But inquiry into terminology is not only the condition of intimate and fruitful contact with history, it can also directly promote the work of philosophy itself. Concerning the dangers of obscure language, concerning the disadvantages of changing and ambiguous expressions, there can be no doubt. But it is far easier to complain of such conditions than to devise means for removing them. Yet unquestionably such a means, such a solid *point d'appui*, is offered by the illumination which historical research sheds on the character of terms. The constraint here exercised induces us to deal more seriously with terms and to insist upon precise significations. The historical pursuit of a term from the time of its origin to the present cannot help making it more transparent; things that lie hidden and often fused in our present stock of variant meanings, things therein that are merely the echoes of former phases of existence, are all detached and set off in single definiteness by this genetic mode of consideration. The conditions and suppositions of the present become clearer to us. By the injection of new life into the term the idea receives greater precision. Lastly, we also gain in our own work on understanding how the created has sprung from the creating.

The opinion is not infrequently advanced that all controversy in philosophy is simply a result of misunderstandings and that agreement in the matter of words would also bring about agreement in the matter of things. So thought most of the thinkers of the seventeenth century, including Descartes and Spinoza. But Kant

repudiated the view with much vehemence. To him the work of philosophy appeared to involve too many antinomies of fact to warrant any hope of composing them by a mere clarification of language. Unquestionably, Kant is right on this point; but if this method is not able to establish complete peace in philosophy, it is certainly a powerful enemy of all unnecessary controversy. Inasmuch as a clarification of verbal expression lessens the number of purely verbal disputes, all the more time and strength can be expended upon real problems and genuine inconsistencies; and that is certainly much. It was a pretty *mot* of Kuno Fischer that true problems are true thoughts. When its energies are applied to true problems, philosophy will bear richer fruits, and we may cherish the hope of its promoting the advancement of the whole even by the very struggles and conflicts which it involves.

## III.

A province of scientific inquiry which offers such a plenitude of material and bears on such important questions, and whose bent and character harmonises with such powerful intellectual movements of our time, should arouse much interest and also much activity. The more so as ever since the beginning of modern philosophy the import of scientific terms has been incessantly forced into notice, and principally by English inquirers, from Bacon and Locke down to Whewell and Mill. If the tendency to treat history exactly is added, we have all the conditions of a progressive development. In fact, much interest is taken and much labor is being expended in this direction, and the attention of thinkers has been sharpened for the questions involved, both in the portraiture of great inquirers and in the editing of their works. More notice is being paid to the subject of terminology, while there is a distinct increase in the number of monographs on important single terms. But with all its individual achievements the state of the province as a whole is far from satisfactory. There is a lack of concentration, of organisation, embracing and holding together the scattered results and guarding the laborers against a useless waste of effort; and the

reason of this lack is solely that questions are treated incidentally and supplementarily, which can be brought into inward and outward connexion only by being independently elaborated and by being made an end in themselves.

It has been the fundamental idea of our inquiry that the term as a union of idea and word possesses a peculiar character and has shared peculiar fortunes. If this view be correct, then terminology must take a place apart and become an independent discipline within the domain of philosophy, and the branches of research bearing upon it must converge and be formed into an intimately connected whole. But this can never be accomplished from detached and isolated points of attack, but demands the protective oversight of some common organising head, such as can only be found in some learned body, academy, or university. Such a body should undertake the compilation of a large thesaurus of terms, on which, in view of the prodigious mass of materials and their vast ramifications, innumerable scholars should be set to work. An archive for terminology would have to prepare the way for and support this undertaking. Having thus obtained a secure foundation, not only would all individual labor be rendered easier and more productive, but an abridged philosophical dictionary could be compiled for the needs of educated people generally. Many are forced to dispense with such a work at great intellectual cost and sorrow, and besides such a dictionary would augment not a little the influence of philosophy on common life. A vast and difficult task, but one which bids fair to yield much fruit.

The organisation absolutely necessary to this end, I have for many years repeatedly recommended in Germany, and have also sought to create an interest for the project by special treatises.<sup>1</sup> Of assenting voices among individual colleagues there has been no lack,—latterly Dr. Schmidkunz of Munich has taken up the cause,—but nowhere has the organisation been set on foot, and so far as I

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<sup>1</sup>*Geschichte der philosophischen Terminologie im Umriss*, 1879; *Parteien und Parteienamen in der Philosophie* (in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, 1886.)

know there is nowhere hope of it. Here, therefore, is a chance and a task awaiting America, where there is no lack of scholarship, talent for organisation, nor of readiness to make sacrifices. American scientists have proved themselves by their work in other fields to be the peers of the scholars of the Old World; why, therefore, should they not undertake the leadership in this new branch which treats of the history and development of the language of philosophy?

RUDOLF EUCKEN.

JENA.